Explorer Set

AMERICAN EDITION

PIANO CLASSICS

MACDOWELL · GRIFFES · BEACH · BARBER
FOOTE · WHITING · KNOWLES PAINE
CHADWICK · NEVIN · LANG · GERSHWIN
BERNSTEIN · IVES · ADAMS · GLASS

EDWARD MACDOWELL 1860-1908

Piano Sonata No.1 Op.45 "Tragica"

1.	I.	Largo maestoso	8'54
2.	II.	Molto allegro, vivace	2'47
3.	III.	Largo con maestà	7'50
4.	IV.	Allegro eroico	8'29

Piano Sonata No.2 Op.50 "Eroica"

5.	I.	Slow, with nobility	8'10
6.	II.	Elf-like, as light and swift as possible	3'31
7.	III.	Tenderly, longingly, yet with passion	5'35
8.	IV.	Fiercely, very fast	7'28

Woodland Sketches Op.51

9.	No.1 To a Wild Rose	1'49
10.	No.2. Will o' the Wisp	1'24
11.	No.3. At an Old Trysting Place	1'33
12.	No.4. In Autumn	1'35
13.	No.5. From an Indian Lodge	2'32
14.	No.6. To a Water Lily	2'34
15.	No.7. From Uncle Remus	1'20
16.	No.8. A Desert Farm	2'29
17.	No.9. By a Meadow Brook	1'09
18.	No.10. Told at Sunset	3'57

Giorgio Trione Bartoli *piano*

Recording: January & February 2022 at the "Nino Rota" auditorium of the N. Piccinni conservatory in Bari, Italy
Audio technician: Giovanni Chiapparino
Piano: Steinway & Sons D274
Piano technician: Luigi Lamacchia
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CHARLES TOMLINSON GRIFFES 1884-1920

Three Tone-Pictures Op.5 (1910-1912)

19.	The Lake at Evening	2'52
20.	The Vale of Dreams	3'18
21.	The Night Winds	2'20
22.	**Winter Landscape** (1912)	4'17

Fantasy Pieces Op.6 (1912-1915)

23.	Barcarolle	6'36
24.	Notturno	6'02
25.	Scherzo	5'14
26.	**Rhapsody in B Minor** (1914)	7'58
27.	**De Profundis** (1915)	6'13

Roman Sketches Op.7 (1915-1916)

28.	The White Peacock	5'18
29.	Nightfall (Al far della notte)	5'46
30.	The Fountain of the Acqua Paola	3'50
31.	Clouds	4'30

Sonata (1917-1919)

32.	Feroce – Allegretto con moto	6'28
33.	Molto tranquillo	3'16
34.	Allegro vivace	5'19

Emanuele Torquati *piano*

Recording: 10-12 June 2016, Auditorium San Rocco, Senigallia, Italy
Sound engineer: Andrea Lambertucci
Piano Tuner: Alessandro Petrolati
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EDWARD MACDOWELL 1860-1908

Three Poems Op.20

35.	Night by the Sea	4'25
36.	A Tale from Knightly Times	3'25
37.	Ballad	3'30

Moon Pictures Op.21

38.	The Hindoo Maiden	2'21
39.	Story of the Stork	1'38
40.	In the Tyrol	3'33
41.	The Swan	2'53
42.	Visit of the Bear	1'41

Hamlet and Ophelia Op.22

43.	Hamlet	7'09
44.	Ophelia	6'22

AMY BEACH 1867-1944

Three Movements

45.	Allegro appassionato	1'42
46.	Moderato	2'53
47.	Allegro con fuoco	3'33

Summer Dreams Op.47

48.	The Brownies	3'27
49.	Robin Redbreast	1'48
50.	Twilight	2'16
51.	Katy-dids	0'53
52.	Elfin Tarantelle	1'51
53.	Good Night	3'36

Justine Marler *narrator*

SAMUEL BARBER 1910-1981

Souvenirs Op.28

54.	Waltz	4'13
55.	Schottische	2'36
56.	Pas de deux	3'53
57.	Two-Step	1'46
58.	Hesitation-Tango	3'46
59.	Galop	2'57

Four hands, *one piano:*
Emma Abbate primo &
Julian Perkins *secondo*

Recording: 16-18 January 2022,
St George's Bristol, UK
Sound engineer and producer: John Taylor
Piano: Steinway Model D
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AMY BEACH 1867-1944

60. **"Out of the Depths" Op.130** (1932) 2'43

61. **Variations on Balkan Themes Op.60** (1904) 25'12
Theme: Adagio malincolico
I. Più mosso
II. Maestoso
III. Allegro ma non troppo
IV. Andante alla Barcarola
V. Largo con molta espressione /Poco più mosso
VI. Quasi Fantasia/Allegro all' 'Ongarese
VII. Vivace/Valse lento
VIII. Con vigore/Lento calmato Marcia funerale Cadenza. Grave/Quasi fantasia/Maestoso/Adagio

62. **"Dreaming" Op.15 No.3** (1892) 4'29

63. **Serenade "Ständchen" after Richard Strauss** (1902) 3'49

64. **Prelude and Fugue Op.81** (1914) 10'30

65. **"Canoeing" Op.119 No.3** (1927) 1'08

66. **"Honeysuckle" Op.97 No.5** (1922) 2'55

67. **"A Hermit Thrush at Eve"** Op.92 No.1 (1922) 4'48

68. **Nocturne Op.107** (1924) 3'41

Three Pieces Op.128 (1932)

69. I. Scherzino: "A Peterborough Chipmunk" 1'10
70. II. "Young Birches" 2'52
71. III. "Humming Bird" 1'01

Martina Frezzotti *piano*

Recording: 10/11 January 2023, Westvest Church, Schiedam, The Netherlands
Producer: Pieter van Winkel
Engineer: Peter Arts
Piano: Steinway D.
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ARTHUR FOOTE 1853-1937

Suite No.1 in D minor Op.15

72. I. Prelude 2'48
73. II. Fugue 2'21
74. III. Romance 5'03
75. IV. Capriccio 3'26

ARTHUR WHITING 1861-1936

Bagatelles for the Piano

76. I. Caprice 2'44
77. II. Humoreske 2'54
78. III. Bagatelle 1'43
79. IV. Idylle 2'44

JOHN KNOWLES PAINE 1839-1906

Three Piano Pieces, Op.41

80. III. Fuga giocosa 1'51

In the Country Op.26

81. I. Woodnotes 1'28
82. II. Wayside Flowers 2'22
83. IV. The Shepherd's Lament 1'45
84. V. Village Dance 1'24
85. VII. The Mill 1'37
86. X. Welcome Home 1'51

GEORGE WHITEFIELD CHADWICK 1854-1931

Five Pieces

87. II. Dans le canot (Barcarolle) 3'51
88. V. Les grenouilles (Humoresque) 6'22

ETHELBERT NEVIN 1862-1901

Water Scenes Op.13

89. I. Dragon Fly 1'26
90. II. Ophelia 3'25
91. III. Water Nymph 2'42
92. IV. Narcissus 2'50
93. V. Barcarolle 4'25

MARGARET RUTHVEN LANG 1867-1972

94. **Rhapsody in E Minor, Op. 21** 8'44

Artem Belogurov *Chickering Piano 1873*

Recording: 7-9 July 2013, St John's Episcopal Church, Charlestown, Massachusetts
Recording Engineer: Christopher Greenleaf
Producer: Tamar Hestrin-Grader
Piano Technician: Tony McKenna
Editing: Antonio Oliart
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GEORGE GERSHWIN 1898-1937

Orginals

95. Do it Again 1'34
96. Fascinating Rhythm 0'48
97. Do Do Do 1'01
98. My One and Only 0'41
99. Clap yo' Hands 0'44
100. Somebody Loves Me 1'08
101. I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise 0'36
102. That Certain Feeling 1'32
103. Liza 2'23
104. Strike up the Band 0'54
105. Sweet and Low Down 0'52
106. Nobody But You 1'01
107. 'S Wonderful 1'05
108. Who Cares 1'10
109. Swanee 0'42
110. Oh, Lady Be Good 1'12
111. I Got Rhythm 1'09
112. The Man I Love 2'23

Arrangements by Enrico Fagnoni

113. Do It Again 2'15
114. Fascinating Rhythm 0'53
115. Do Do Do 2'28
116. My One and Only 1'52
117. Clap yo' Hands 0'49
118. Somebody Loves Me 2'26
119. I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise 2'17
120. That Certain Feeling 1'47
121. Liza 3'09
122. Strike up the Band 2'08
123. Sweet and Low Down 2'33
124. Nobody But You 1'54
125. 'S Wonderful 2'05
126. Who Cares 1'53
127. Swanee 1'20
128. Oh, Lady Be Good 3'51
129. I Got Rhythm 1'36
130. The Man I Love 3'46

Enrico Fagnoni *piano*

Recording: July–August 2020, Hall by Alberto Napolitano pianoforti, Napoli, Italy
Sound engineer: Mario Fagnoni and Geo Pagliuca
Editing: Mario Fagnoni
Two pianos Steinway&sons mod. D, prepared by Antonio Granozio for Alberto Napolitano Pianoforti
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LEONARD BERNSTEIN 1918 – 1990

Sonata

131. I. 5'02
132. II. 9'25

133. **Touches** 8'31

Four Sabras

134. Ilana (The Dreamer) 1'14
135. Idele (The Chassidele) 1'46
136. Yosi (The Jokester) 0'57
137. Dina (The Tomboy who Weeps Alone) 0'59

Four Anniversaries

138. For Felicia Montealegre 2'13
139. For Johnny Mehegan 0'40
140. For David Diamond 1'28
141. For Helen Coates 1'18

Five Anniversaries

142. For Elizabeth Rudolf 1'17
143. For Lukas Foss 1'46
144. For Elizabeth B. Ehrman 0'44
145. For Sandy Gellhorn 1'36
146. For Susanna Kyle 1'26

Seven Anniversaries

147. For Aaron Copland 1'25
148. For My Sister, Shirley 1'08
149. In Memoriam: Alfred Eisner 2'32
150. For Paul Bowles 1'18
151. In Memoriam: Nathalie Koussevitzky 1'59
152. For Sergei Koussevitzky 1'02
153. For William Schuman 0'41

154. **Non troppo presto** 1'54

Music for the Dance, No. II

155. I. Moderato 0'56
156. II. Waltz Time 1'12
157. III. Allegro non troppo, with force 1'37

Thirteen Anniversaries

158. For Shirley Gabis Rhoads Perle 1'27
159. In Memoriam: William Kapell 0'25
160. For Stephen Sondheim 1'15
161. For Craig Urquhart 0'54
162. For Leo Smit 0'30
163. For My Daughter, Nina 2'18
164. In Memoriam: Helen Coates 2'45
165. In Memoriam: Goddard Lieberson 1'01
166. For Jessica Fleischmann 2'14
167. In Memoriam: Constance Hope 2'19
168. For Felicia, On Our 28th Birthday (& Her 52nd) 1'21
169. For Aaron Stern 2'00
170. In Memoriam: Ellen Goetz 2'07

Michele Tozzetti *piano*

Recording: 8-10 December 2017
at Musicafelix – Studio Benelli Mosell, Prato, Italy
Producer: Roberto Prosseda – Musicafelix
Sound engineer, editing and mastering: Matteo Costa
Recording Assistant: Sandro Tozzetti
Piano: Fazioli F 278 n. 1660
Piano Technician: Massimiliano Pinazzo
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CHARLES IVES 1874–1954

Piano Sonata No.1 (c.1900-1910)

171. I. Adagio con moto – Andante con moto – Allegro risoluto '*with a certain kind of poise and dignity but not exactly slower' Agitando 'in a kind of furious way (hit hard)'/'ease down*' Adagio cantabile 7'54
172. IIa. Allegro moderato (*1st Verse*) – Andante (*1st Chorus*) 1'36
173. IIb. 'In the Inn': Allegro (*2nd Verse*) – Meno mosso (*2nd Chorus*) 4'01
174. III. Largo – Allegro – Largo 7'09
175. IVa. (crotchet = 88–100) '*a study in "Rag" for 5s, 3s and 2s together*' 1'12
176. IVb. Allegro – Presto (*as fast as possible*) – Slow 3'01
177. V. Andante maestoso – A tempo (*Andante or Allegretto*) 'più animato' – Adagio cantabile – Allegro – Andante (*or Allegro moderato con brio*) 10'05

Piano Sonata No.2 'Concord, Mass. 1840-1860' (1911-1915)

178. I. Emerson ('*a composite picture or impression*') 13'48
179. II. Hawthorne ('*an "extended fragment", reflecting "some of his wilder, fantastical adventures into the half childlike, half fairy-like phantasmal realms*") 11'23
180. III. The Alcotts ('a sketch') 5'01
181. IV. Thoreau ('an autumn day of Indian Summer at Walden')* 10'24

*with Eleonore Pameijer *flute*

Recording: 1995
Piano: Steinway, Hamburg
Publishers: Peer Int. Corp. 1954 – reprint 1990 (No.1); Associated Music Publishers Inc. 1947 (No.2)
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JOHN ADAMS b.1947

182. China Gates 5'54
183. Phrygian Gates 28'12
184. American Berserk 7'13
185. Halleluiah Junction* 16'00

Jeroen van Veen *piano*
*Sandra van Veen *second piano*

Recording: 7 November 2015 (4), 13 June 2016 (3), 24-25 August 2017 (1, 2), Studio I Pernissimo, Pernis, The Netherlands
Produced by: Van Veen Productions for Brilliant Classics
Executive Producer: Jeroen van Veen
Engineered & Mastered by: Pianomania
Software: Pro Tools, Logic & Sequoia
Microphones: DPA 4006A
Pianos: Fazioli 2.78 (3), Fazioli 3.08 (4) from Evert Snel, Werkhoven, and Yamaha Grand Piano C7
Music published by Boosey & Hawkes, Associated Music Publishers
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PHILIP GLASS b.1968

Etudes for Piano Book I

186. Etude 1 in G minor 6'29
187. Etude 2 in A minor 7'26
188. Etude 3 in A 4'46
189. Etude 4 in D minor 4'23
190. Etude 5 in F minor 9'49
191. Etude 6 in F minor 5'49
192. Etude 7 in A minor 14'40
193. Etude 8 in C 7'03
194. Etude 9 in F minor 3'53
195. Etude 10 in E-Flat 8'37

Jeroen van Veen *piano*

Recording: 27-28 February 2017, Van Veen Productions, Studio II, Pernissimo, Pernis, The Netherlands
Produced by: Van Veen Productions for Brilliant Classics
Executive Producer: Jeroen van Veen
Engineered & Mastered by: Pianomania
Microphones: DPA 4006A
Piano: Yamaha Grand Piano C7
Music published by: Chester Music
Software: Pro Tools, Logic & Sequoia
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Cover: *Boys in a Pasture*, 1874 by Winslow Homer (1836-1910)
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A multiplicity of cultural influences makes the figure of Edward MacDowell (1860-1908), an American pianist-composer trained for a long time in Europe, particularly original. Born in New York, he received his first lessons from Colombian, Cuban and Venezuelan musicians, including the famous pianist Teresa Carreño. At the age of seventeen, MacDowell continued his studies at the Paris Conservatory, in Antoine Marmontel's class, and then at the Frankfurt Hochschule, where he studied composition with Joachim Raff. He was listened to by Clara Schumann and Franz Liszt, and was introduced by the latter – who appreciated his Modern Suite Op.10 – to the publisher Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. After completing his studies, MacDowell taught piano in Darmstadt until 1884 and then in Wiesbaden until 1888. During these years he married one of his pupils, Marian Griswold Nevins. In financial difficulties, the MacDowells decided to return to the United States in the autumn of 1888. In Boston, he combined his work as a composer with that of a concert pianist. When he moved to New York in 1896, he also taught at Columbia University, where MacDowell was the first to create a music department.

In the same year, 1896, the MacDowells bought a farm in New Hampshire, an ideal place to pursue musical creativity in a peaceful rural setting. Much of MacDowell's compositional output dates from this happy period, including two piano concertos, two orchestral suites, four symphonic poems, several piano suites, Songs, four piano sonatas and numerous piano transcriptions of 18th-century music. MacDowell had to give up his teaching post at Columbia after a series of disputes with the University's president, Nicholas Murray Butler, who had accused the busy composer of neglecting teaching. This professional disappointment plunged him into a severe depression. According to recent theories, his death in 1908 was due to excessive use of potassium bromide, used at the time to treat insomnia. Lawrence Gilman describes his last years, tragically marked by mental illness: 'His mind became as that of a little child. He sat quietly, day after day, in a chair by a window, smiling patiently from time to time at those about him, turning the pages of a book of fairy tales that seemed to give him a definite pleasure, and greeting with a fugitive gleam of recognition certain of his m Although MacDowell has often been associated with Liszt, the sources of his inspiration are to be found even more in German romanticism, both poetic (Goethe, Heine) and musical (Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms), combined with a predilection for Nordic sagas. It is in the key of the Celtic Revival – also considering MacDowell's Irish and Scottish origins – that the four Sonatas for piano should be read: not only the Third and the Fourth, explicitly entitled "Celtic" and "Nordic", but also the First, referring to legends and myths of the Breton cycle, and the Second, subtitled "Flower of King Arthur".

The "Tragic" Sonata No.1 Op.45, published in 1893, is opened by a Largo Maestoso introduction whose rhythmic and intervallic material forms the basis of the entire composition. MacDowell immediately introduces his characteristic dynamic contrasts, ranging from whispering to fffing with clamour. Roaring double octaves and a spectacular scale that spans the entire keyboard lead to the Allegro risoluto, in which a chivalrous first motif is countered by a quieter, dreamier second theme of clear Nordic inspiration, followed by an even more ethereal, calm pianissimo third motif. Rather than a true development, this first movement presents a construction based on the juxtaposition of episodes, in which timbre variation becomes crucial: one of the most striking aspects is the opposition of fine chimes to sombre chimes in the bass. Delicacy and emphatic (but never gratuitously bombastic) titanism are taken to extremes. The coda presents the typically MacDowell twist of an 'extinction' that is suddenly negated by a vehement chord, resulting in an impetuous momentum.

Between serious humour in the style of Schumann and lightness, the Scherzo is brief and dramaturgically effective; light poetry and grotesque hints (especially on the left hand) emerge in the Trio, whose serenity is undermined by some disquieting modulations. The atmosphere of an epic tale of vast dimensions returns in the Largo con maestà, a solemn procession that sometimes dissolves into lyricism or gives rise to cyclopean crescendos, almost à la Rachmaninov. A quieter motif, hovering over light chords, interrupts the grandiose procession, until powerful scales bring us back to the initial mood. But the close is this time under the sign of a tragic inevitability, with sinister chimes in the bass, ever more distant.

Allegro eroico, fortissimo (un) poco pomposo, the finale transfigures the tragic into epic-chivalric. Spectacular scales, acciaccature, trills, tremolos on the characteristic dotted rhythm that glues the entire composition together, delineating a rich but never ostentatiously pyrotechnic piano universe. On the contrary, it should be emphasised that it is in the moments of almost immaterial delicacy, rather than in the triumphant pressing of great sonorities, that MacDowell finds the moments of greatest artistic standing. Yet the Sonata, almost contradicting its title, closes in an optimistic and triumphant G major. A little later (1894-95), Sonata No.2 Op.50 is entitled "Eroica", but it opens in a more tragic mood than the previous one: the first motif in G minor, intensely melancholic, quickly reaches desperate tones. After a mysterious and fleeting transitional episode, the second thematic group presents a suspended and almost stuttering motif, followed by sensual fin de siècle atmospheres. Even more than Sonata No.1, this Sonata is built on parataxis, with sudden and rhapsodic alternations of moving and motionless episodes, according to an extremely moody trend that wildly flows into a concluding fff.

The second movement reworks Mendelssohn's fantasy from a Celtic perspective, as MacDowell had already done with his best-known piece, the Hexentanz Op.17 (Witches' Dance). This Elf-like, with its volatas, trills, acciaccatos and graceful gracefulness, would seem to be inoffensive piano decorativism, yet we hear – especially in the final part – the shivering echo of Wagnerian Valkyries.

Although MacDowell aspires to German Sehnsucht, it is a tenderness of a more Anglo-Saxon stamp, barely tinged with passion, that emerges in the dreamy third movement, whose brief passionate outbursts do not undermine an overall ecstatic atmosphere. The finale, hyper-dynamic and close to the Nordic saga atmosphere of certain pages by Grieg, is marked by even more sudden changes of mood, with heroism, sorrowful motifs and severe chorales. Particularly original is the coda, which opens on a mysterious, glimmering murmur and seems to close with a flourish, but the last chord negates the heroism with a sweetly serene pianissimo.

The Woodland Sketches Op.51, published in New York in 1896, show how MacDowell was perhaps more at home in the short Charakterstück than in the large form. An enchanting page in terms of harmonic refinement and lulling placidity is To a Wild Rose, later repeated in the second movement of the Celtic Sonata. We find the elfin atmosphere, wittily mischievous, in Will o' the Wisp. A fine polyphony characterises the elegiac at an old Trysting-place, while In autumn is full of vital fibrillation. MacDowell uses three Native American melodies in the evocative and exotic fifth sketch, From an Indian Lodge, which is close to certain ghostly Mussorgsky atmospheres; and becomes more French-like in To a Water-lily, which, on three staves, rings out Fauré-like harmonies in an atmosphere that could recall Monet's water lilies at Giverny. From Uncle Remus brings a breath of healthy domestic good humour; A desert farm recalls the immensely solitary and nostalgic atmospheres of the beloved countryside. A fairy-tale atmosphere, amidst sparkles and references to Mendelssohnian-Shakespeare, distinguishes By a Meadow Brook; finally, Told at Sunset appears as a eulogy of contrasts of light and tone, amidst extreme whispers and strange triumphant cries.

© Luca Ciammarughi

"The Vale of Dreams: rediscovering the piano works of Charles Griffes"

The third of five children, Charles Tomlinson Griffes was born in 1884 in Elmira, a small town about 200 miles from New York, to a prominent family in the legal profession. Happily, his musical gifts were recognized early on, and he was enrolled at a local College so that he could study with Mary Broughton, who had studied in Berlin under Karl Klindworth, in his turn a pupil of Franz Liszt. In keeping with this prestigious pedigree, the budding pianist followed in his teacher's footsteps, choosing in 1903 to study in Berlin for 4 years.

In those days to study music in Europe was considered an essential rite of passage for any American musician bent on great achievement. Griffes's arrival in Berlin coincided with the end of the romantic age and the rise of new musical trends such as impressionism and expressionism. In 1906 Griffes attended the première of Richard Strauss's Salomé, which êhad a huge

impact on him, to the extent that he returned for a further four performances. Griffes was certainly au fait with the works of Scriabin, Debussy and Ravel, and also familiar with the compositions of Schoenberg. Indeed, he wrote to his mother to tell her that he could not imagine how he would manage without “these things” in America. By 1905, such contact with Europe’s most advanced composers had persuaded him to extend his stay in Berlin to study composition, initially under Engelbert Humperdinck, whose opera Hänsel und Gretel had been widely acclaimed. In this he found financial help as well as inspiration in Emil Joel, with whom he was involved in a relationship. Griffes thus continued to assimilate the essence of German musical culture, veering towards composition as a career, while persevering as a soloist and an accompanist for singers.

On returning to the United States in 1907 he continued to develop his profile as a composer, certainly influenced by his experience in Europe, but also with an idiom of his own to develop. Since childhood he had been fascinated by literature and poetry, and this passion became a source of inspiration for many of his piano works, which are central to his overall oeuvre since he died of influenza at the early age of 35. In 1909 Schirmer published the Five Lieder that he had begun in Berlin, while his first piano work, the Three Tone-Pictures Op.5, was initially turned down on account of its modest appeal for amateur pianists. Composed between 1910 and 1912, these pieces were finally published in 1915, thanks to the good offices of the great Ferruccio Busoni, who had met Griffes while on a concert tour in America and had been particularly impressed by him. Thanks to this encounter, Griffes was able to sign up with Schirmer. On hearing him play the Op.5, Busoni had been especially struck by The Vale of Dreams, with its shimmering, ethereal harmonies that almost transcend key. Each of the three brief compositions is inspired by poems by Edgar Allan Poe and W.B. Yeats, and the third, The Night Winds, is distinctly reminiscent of Debussy’s prelude Ce qu’a vu le vent de l’Ouest.

The descriptive element is certainly a salient feature of Griffes’s compositions, where the focus is on expressing in musical terms the perceptions inspired by poetry. This is clearly also the case of the next two piano cycles, both of them more imposing in scale: the Fantasy Pieces Op.6 (1912-1915), and the Roman Sketches Op.7 (1915-1916).

The first consists of 3 pieces (Barcarola-Notturno-Scherzo) inspired by poems by Paul Verlaine. The last of the three, the pressing, almost orgiastic Scherzo, was also arranged for orchestra in 1919 under the title Baccanale. Gone is the mellow, elusive atmosphere of the earlier pieces, and in its stead we have a flurry of pentatonic scales and dotted rhythms that recall the exotic atmosphere of the Far East, for which Griffes nurtured a particular interest. In 1912, this passion was to culminate in the composition of his most substantial orchestral work, The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan, Op.8. In the second cycle, Roman Sketches Op.7, the evident orientalism of the Scherzo is replaced by evocations of Italy based on verse by William Sharp published under the title Sospiri di Roma in 1891. The cycle opens with Griffes’s most famous piano piece, The White Peacock, which he later rearranged for orchestra. In writing it he was inspired by his own visit a decade earlier to the Zoological Gardens in Berlin, where he was transfixed by a magnificent example of a white peacock. The piano 4composition was soon included in the repertoire of eminent pianists such Myra Hess and Olga Samaroff, who also played the other pieces in the cycle to great public and critical acclaim. With its overlapping chords in the ninth and thirteenth, Nightfall conjures up an aura of mystery, while The Fountain of Acqua Paola is a virtuoso piece somewhat reminiscent of Liszt’s Les jeux d’eaux à la Villa d’Este. The last piece is Clouds, in which the initial harmonies break down in the unusual 7/4 meter to create a form of polytonal fragmentation that heralds a new start in the composer’s oeuvre.

This change in direction culminated in Griffes’s most consistent and comprehensive work, the Sonata that he began in 1917 and completed in 1919. Griffes himself gave it its premiere performance, earning some rough treatment on the part of the critics who felt that it drifted in nothingness and was bereft of all beauty. Though time has revealed the myopia of the critics, it was not generous with the composer, who died in 1920 when this new phase of creativity was still in its infancy. The oustanding features of the new

perspective were a more concise, abstract musical language, unconstrained by the literary images that had prevailed in earlier works. Although the Sonata also comprises three movements, the first two actually follow on one from another without interruption. Despite the great variety of expressive situations, however, the works is in no way fragmentary: a sense of thematic and stylistic coherence prevails, as exemplified by the way the melody line of the second movement reappears in the third. From the opening statement marked "Feroce" through to the passionate Finale, the work is Griffes's most ambitious composition for the piano. Apart from the three cycles Op.5, Op.6 and Op.7, Griffes also composed a few individual pieces: A Winter Landscape (1912), an darkly evocative work; the Rhapsody in B minor (1914), which is more wide-sweeping and varied; and the De Profundis (1915), inspired by Oscar Wilde's testimonial, with due Wagnerian connotations.

Griffes was endowed with a creative vein that allowed him to produce, in the space of a decade, works for the piano that were to become a point of reference for the following generation of American composers, especially Charles Ives andAaron Copland. Indeed, Copland paid him posthumous tribute at Harvard in 1952: "What he gave those of us who came after him was a sense of the adventurous in composition, of being thoroughly alive to the newest trends in world music and to the stimulus that might be derived from such contact."

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Translation by Kate Singleton

Both Beach and MacDowell were formidably accomplished pianists who wrote concertos in barnstorming virtuoso style, for themselves and their contemporaries to play, but they could also turn their hands to the lucrative domestic market for piano-duet music. In doing so they also tapped into the 19th-century, Romantic preoccupation with childhood which Schumann had encapsulated in his Kinderszenen of 1838. MacDowell wrote his Moon Pictures Op.21 in the winter of 1884-5, and subtitled them 'after H.C. Andersen's Picture-Book without Pictures', referring to an 1848 collection of short bedtime stories. The opening movement evokes Andersen's vision of a Hindu girl, 'light as the gazelle, beautiful as Eve… There is scarcely anything so airy and yet so affluent in the luxuriance of beauty, as the daughter of India.' MacDowell based 'The Story of the Stork' on the 13th episode in the collection, and in its tripping rhythms we may see as well as hear the children at play outside their cottages before the gentle coda brings news of the new addition to the family associated with the unseen arrival of the stork, a bundle of joy (for now) in its beak. No.3 of the Moon Pictures is set in the landscape of the Tyrol. Two nuns ring the bell for Vespers. A solemn hymn rises and falls on the air. Momentum picks up to show a travelling carriage in the valley below, and the bell and the hymn sound over it before stillness returns. 'The Swan' of the collection's fourth movement is wearied by its journey and sinks earthwards, 'like a soap-bubble in the still air; it touched the surface of the water, bowed back its head between its wings, and lay still, like a white lotus upon the calm Indian Sea.' In the final story of Moon Pictures, a bear is led into town by his itinerant master, and inspected by a trio of little children. The bear joins in the children's game of soldiers – a little march ensues – before their mother arrives, and the fun stops. Published in 1901 and dedicated to the composer's niece, the six duets of the album's title collection, Summer Dreams by Beach, are technically simpler than the Moon Pictures, but they are prefaced by literary quotations which once more indicate that this is not music for children so much as music for adults to play to children, and for adults to play at being children. In any case, simpler means and fewer notes need hardly imply naivety of expression, and Beach's self-taught technique was too rigorous to allow anything less than the most deftly fashioned work to escape her desk. 'The Brownies' is a fleet-footed, Mendelssohnian scherzo, headed by Oberon's invocation from A Midsummer Night's Dream: 'Through the house give glimmering light/By the dead and drowsy fire/Every elf and fairy sprite/Hop as light as bird from brier.' Beach had previously set this text as a partsong for female chorus in the last of her Three Shakespeare Choruses of 1897. A robin pecks and chirps in waltz time in the second of the Summer Dreams, and Beach supplies her own preface to the Largo religioso of the

third: ‘The birds have hushed themselves to rest/And Night comes fast to drop her pall/Till Morn brings life to all.’ The katydid is a North American insect, similar to a grasshopper and named after its distinctive call which Whitman immortalises in Beach’s chosen quotation over No.4: ‘The katy-did works her chromatic reed/On the walnut tree over the well.’ The ‘Elfin Tarantelle’ of No.5 returns to the Shakespearean, nocturnal world of No.1, and Beach brings her cycle to rest with a nocturne which takes its title from a poem by her friend Agnes Lockhart Hughes, ‘Good Night’. Beach made synaesthetic associations between colours and tonalities, and the predominant C major of this finale is her ‘white’ key, with excursions into the A flat of her ‘blue’ key, mirroring Lockhart’s evocation of ‘Night’s starry eyes’.

Composed in 1883, Beach’s brief Three Movements for piano duet are the work of a prodigiously talented teenager who knows her early-Romantic piano literature – including Kinderszenen – inside out, but who also understands at this stage how to emulate rather than merely copy her models. No.1 is a Schubertian march in its gently offbeat humour and bittersweet harmony. The contemplative No.2 is more exploratory in its harmonic movement, and the finale returns to a Schubertian world in which Beach’s marking of Allegro con fuoco is somewhat belied by the contented nature of her material. In the following year of 1884, the 23-year-old MacDowell wrote his Three Poems Op.20. A grave chord sequence introduces the first of them, ‘Night by the Sea’, before a rich bass line evokes the rolling and lapping waves with a Whitmanesque majesty. This yields to a more ardent central section focused on a yearning melody in the lower voice, offset by glittering parallel upper harmonies. The rolling waves return, the atmosphere transfigured in a sumptuous D flat major. No.2 is ‘A Tale from Knightly Times’, which immediately sallies forth, Allegro eroico, like a nobleman on his steed, mane flying in the wind. Thus the central section in this case is contrastingly romantic in mood, before modulations in the reprise ratchet up the tension towards a triumphant homecoming. The third and last of the Poems is cast in the archetypally Romantic form of the ‘Ballad’. The Allegretto placido marking sets the scene only for the opening pages of the story: the form in this case is more free-flowing, embracing a waltz-like melody and rising to peaks of tempestuous passion before subsiding to rapt coda, all in the space of less than four minutes.

Strictly speaking, Hamlet and Ophelia is the outlier in this collection, since MacDowell composed it in 1894 as a tone-poem for orchestra in the Lisztian manner, and then made this two-piano transcription rather than leaving the work to the kind of professional arranger habitually commissioned by publishers for such treatment. Nevertheless he took the kind of care over it that Brahms did in arranging his symphonies, and the piano-duet version retains the brooding tension of the opening and effectively transfers the violinistic surges of Hamlet’s main section to the keyboard.

The album’s final collection takes a chronological leap forward to 1952, but its nostalgia-drenched mood belongs to an intermediate age. ‘One might imagine a divertissement in a setting of the Palm Court at the Plaza Hotel,’ Barber explained in a letter to his publisher, ‘the year about 1914, epoch of the first tangos. Souvenirs – remembered with affection, not in irony or with tongue in cheek, but in amused tenderness.’ Barber, it should be noted, would have been four years old at the time, and so these are ‘souvenirs’ in the manner of sepia-tinted postcards. Six dances make up Barber’s suite: Waltz, Schottische, Pas de deux, Two-Step, Hesitation-Tango, and Galop. They are coloured by post-Stravinskian melodic intervals and harmonies even while the dance rhythms (not excluding the delightful 5/4 section in the Waltz) are those of an earlier century. The circumstances of its composition perhaps contribute to the escapist feel of the suite, which is dedicated to Charles Turner, a pianist friend of the composer. Turner recalled Barber having fallen into a dry spell after the success of the Piano Sonata. Barber remarked to him: ‘When I look at the music paper I feel frightened. I can’t think of anything.’ Turner replied, ‘Why don’t you write a party piece, something we can play at parties?’ Souvenirs is the result. Turner also recalled Barber frequenting a bar called the Blue Angel, where two resident pianists known as Edie and Rack played ‘rather sophisticated cabaret music’. The suite took on a second life when Lincoln Kirstein – with George Balanchine, co-founder of New York City

Ballet – commissioned Barber to orchestrate it for a ballet, but the scale of the original piano-duo version best suits the carefree mood of music written firstly to give pleasure to its performers, as do all the best piano duets.
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Amy Beach (née Cheney) was born into a musical family in Henniker, New Hampshire, on the 5th September, 1867. She was allegedly able to sing some forty songs accurately by the age of one, while demonstrating the ability to improvise counter-melody in her second year. By the age of three, she had taught herself to read and the following year, she composed three waltzes away from the piano, memorising them while staying at her grandfather's farm and only playing them upon her return home. While her mother, Clara Imogene Cheney (née Marcy) (1846-1911), initially prevented her from playing the piano, in the misguided belief that indulging a child's wishes might undermine parental authority, she eventually began lessons with her mother at the age of six with public recitals following sooner after. The family moved to Chelsea, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, in 1875 and she began studying with Johann Ernst Perabo (1845-1920) and, later, with Carl Baermann (1839-1913) – a pupil and friend of Franz Liszt (1811-1886). Apart from a brief period between 1881-1882 when she studied harmony and counterpoint with Junius W. Hill (1840-1916), she was largely self-taught as a composer, acquiring every text concerning musical composition she could lay her hands on, even going as far as translating the treatises of Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) and François-Auguste Gevaert (1828-1908) from the French for her own personal use. She made her official début as pianist at the age of sixteen on the 18th October 1883 in a Promenade Concert held at Boston's Musical Hall, eliciting critical acclaim. Two years later, however, she married Dr. Henry Harris Aubrey Beach (1843-1910), a Boston surgeon some twenty years her senior, and from this period she began to appear as Mrs. H. H. A. Beach. Whilst a happy marriage, it wasn't one without its restrictions: she was permitted to give no more than two recitals a year and to agree never to teach the piano while married, in accordance with the social status to which she was elevated in marriage – a far from unusual obligation bestowed on women of the upper classes in nineteenth century America. Her husband did encourage her to compose, however, and her first compositional success came in 1892 with her *Mass in E* flat (1890)[1] when it was performed by the Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra of Boston. The *première* of her *Gaelic Symphony*, Op.32 (1897) came in 1896 when it was performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and earned her a place among the 'Boston Six',[2] while the *première* of her Piano Concerto, Op.45 (1899) was given in 1900 by the Boston Symphony with Beach as soloist – all compositional milestones eliciting rave reviews. By the time her husband died in the summer of 1910, with her mother following suit some seven months later (her father had already died in 1895), she travelled to Europe in 1911 with the American soprano and prima donna of the Berlin Royal Opera, Marcella (Marcia) Craft (1874-1959). From this point she adopted the name of simply 'Amy Beach', making appearances in many major European cities, including, Berlin, Paris and Rome, returning to the USA at the outbreak of the First World War. She took up residence with her aunt and cousin (her only next of kin) in Hillsborough, New Hampshire, while she took on a steady schedule of concert appearances, spending time in New York City and her summer cottage on Cape Cod, Centerville, Massachusetts, which she purchased entirely from the royalties of her song, *Ecstasy* (1892). After the deaths of her cousin in 1920 and her aunt in 1925, she took a sojourn in Rome during the winter of 1928-1929 before renting a studio apartment in New York City in the Autumn of 1930, becoming virtual composer-in-residence at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church. Her prolificacy as a writer of articles on music together with her advocacy of musical education led to her serving as President of the Board of Councillors of the New England Conservatory of Music and the award of an honorary master's degree at the University of New Hampshire in 1928. Heart disease led to her eventual retirement in 1940 before succumbing to heart failure in New York City on the 27th December 1944 when she was laid to rest with her husband in Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston, Massachusetts.

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1 All dates given refer to first publication.

2 The 'Boston Six' became the collective term used for a group of composers unofficially termed the 'Second New England School' which, together with Beach, included: George Chadwick (1854-1931), Arthur Foote (1853-1937), Edward MacDowell (1861-1908), John Knowles Paine (1839-1906) and Horatio Parker (1863-1919).

Out of the depths, (Psalm 130), Op.130

Out of the depths, Op.130 was published in 1932 and dates from Beach's later period. It is a sober reflection on psalm 130, one of the penitential psalms known more commonly as De profundis. In the key of B minor, a strident declamatory theme, high in the treble, opens the piece at a blistering *fortissimo*. Interspersed with dissonant syncopations, it descends with a *diminuendo* and gives way to a poignant iteration of the opening theme, underpinned by more persuasive harmonies. Rapidly gathering momentum, it builds to a desperate climax before a hushed reprise of the opening music ensues and draws the piece to its resigned close.

Variations on Balkan Themes, Op.60

Theme: Adagio malincolico

I. Più mosso
II. Maestoso
III. Allegro ma non troppo
IV. Andante alla Barcarola
V. Largo con molta espressione – Poco più mosso
VI. Quasi Fantasia – Allegro all' 'Ongarese
VII. Vivace – Valse lento
VIII. Con vigore – Lento calmato

Marcia funerale

Cadenza. Grave – Quasi fantasia – Maestoso come Var. IIdo – Adagio

The *Variations on Balkan Themes*, Op.60 ranks among Beach's most extensive and demanding compositions for solo piano. It is also one of her most important. Written in 1904 and published in 1906 – a period which witnessed brutal reprisals under the ruling Ottomans in the wake a recent uprising of Macedonian nationalists – it dates from that especially fertile period of her career which witnessed the composition of her *Gaelic Symphony*, Op.32 (1897) and her *Piano Concerto*, Op.45 (1899) and is based on no more than four themes given to her by a missionary to the Balkans: the Serbian folk song, *O Maiko Moyá* serves as the work's principal theme while the other themes are the Balkan folk songs, *Stara Planina, Nasadil ye Dadó*, and *Macedonian!*. In the key of C sharp minor, the work runs the gamut in terms of keys, pianistic writing and style – comprising a distillation of the chosen themes in the assorted guises of a barcarolle, a Hungarian *friska*, a dusky parlour waltz, a funeral march, and many others besides. It proved something of a lifelong preoccupation for Beach which witnessed the preparation of a version for piano and orchestra made in 1906 which never came to fruition, a revision of the solo work in 1936 and a version for two pianos the following year which remains in manuscript. The 1906 version, however, is the one presented here.

Dreaming, Op.15 No.3 (1892)

Dreaming is the third of the *Four Sketches*, Op.15 which were published in 1892. Each piece is prefaced by a quotation from the poetry of either Victor Hugo (1802-1885) or Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869). *Dreaming* benefits from the former with the line, "*tu me parles du fond d'un rêve" – ("you speak to me from the depths of a dream")* from his poem, *A celle que qui est voilée – (To the one who is veiled)* from the volume *Les contemplations* (1856). Casting its spell in the key of G flat major, a languid melody hovers over undulating triplets. Modulating through a host of different keys, it soars to a brief, impassioned climax before subsiding to a hushed close. Beach later arranged this piece for 'cello and piano.

Ständchen (Serenade) after Richard Strauss

Beach's transcription of Richard Strauss's (1864-1949) song, *Ständchen*, the second of his *Sechs Lieder*, Op.17 (1888), was published in 1902 and, in the original key of F sharp major, remains a faithful transcription of Strauss's original, save the ending which she extends with a more fulsome elaboration, magnifying this dramatic narrative of the poem as the sun rises and the lovers are enveloped in the dawn light.

Prelude and Fugue, Op.81 (1914)
The *Prelude and Fugue*, Op.81 was begun in 1912 and published in 1914. It ranks among Beach's most important works. In the key of A minor, the same group of notes forms the basis of both the theme of the prelude and the subject of the fugue, none other than those which form her name: A-B-E-A-C-H, making for a granitine opening statement together with fulsome improvisation, and an angular fugal subject, rich with contrapuntal possibility, which Beach exploits to the full. It has been suggested that the work is a possible homage to Liszt's mighty *Fantasie und Fuge über das Thema B-A-C-H*, S.529ii (1871) and, indeed, there are many striking resemblances between the two works in terms of structure and the big-boned virtuoso pianism that pervades.

Canoeing, Op.119 No.3 (1927)
Canoeing is the third number of a set entitled *From Six to Twelve*, Op.119 published in 1927 with a dedication "To the Junior and Juvenile Beach Clubs of Hillsborough". In the key of C major, it features an innocuous little melody interlaced within a series of ascending arpeggios - writing of touching simplicity and not without poignancy.

Honeysuckle, Op.97 No.5 (1922)
Honeysuckle is the fifth and final piece from a set entitled *From Grandmother's Garden*, Op.97 which appeared in 1922. For this crowning number of a set which all draw their inspiration from flower names, Beach conjures a gossamer-like waltz in the key of A minor of a delicacy immediately redolent of the twisting fragile mantle of scented flowers the title suggests. Comprising a brief middle section in the tonic major, it should prove persuasive enough to coax even the shyest faeries from their hollows.

A Hermit Thrush at Eve, Op.92 No.1 (1922)
A Hermit Thrush at Eve is the first of a set of two pieces entitled *Hermit Thrush*, Op.92, the other being *Hermit Thrush at Morn*. Both pieces are prefaced by short poems, in this instance the following by John Vance Cheney (1848-1922) entitled The Hermit-Thrush:

Holy, holy! – In the hush
Hearken to the hermit-thrush;
All the air
Is in prayer.

Both pieces were written at the MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, New Hampshire where Beach notated with, great accuracy, the hermit-thrush songs she heard there. Indeed, she goes as far as to include a footnote from the outset of birdsong which reads: "These bird-calls are exact notations of hermit thrush songs, in the original keys but an octave lower, obtained at the MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, N.H." In the key E flat minor, it unfolds with an achingly beautiful melody which glides over a cycle of fifths. A more rhetorical middle section features the hermit-thrush's twilit song before the return of the opening theme when iterations of our avian character's song return to draw the piece to a hushed close.

Nocturne, Op.107 (1924)
The *Nocturne*, Op.107 was first published in 1924. Opening with a rhetorical gesture which provides the foil to the piece, a languorous melody in the key of E major emerges, accompanied by pulsating syncopated chords. A middle section then ensues yet, unable to settle on a key, it mounts to an impassioned climax when the opening theme returns in the home key. Its passion spent, the rhetorical gesture with which the piece opened returns to draw it to a close.

Three Pieces, Op.128 (1932)
No.1 Scherzino: A Peterborough Chipmunk
No.2 Young Birches
No.3 A Humming-Bird

The *Three Piano Pieces*, Op.128 were also composed at the MacDowell Colony and first published in 1932. Their language is decidedly more chromatic in comparison to earlier works. The first, entitled *Scherzino*, *A Peterborough Chipmunk* and in the key of G major, makes for a humorous opening to the set; its helter-skelter figuration immediately redolent of the lithe, bushy-tailed creature from whom Beach drew inspiration. The second is entitled *Young Birches* and, while in the key of F sharp minor, has a distinctly modal feel with its flattened sevenths. Whispering chains of double notes high in the treble suggest the silvery rustle of leaves while a melancholy left hand melody unfolds beneath. The last piece of the set, entitled *A Humming-bird*, is in the key of G flat major and, is its title suggests, takes flight with florid tremolo and arpeggio figurations which abound hither the thither with a gentle fluttering of wings. Beach later played the second and first of these pieces at the White House for some four hundred guests assembled in the East Room, describing the event as "one of the most beautiful experiences" of her life in a letter of thanks to Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) the next day.

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The nineteenth-century in America was the great age of the piano, not just for professional performers and composers, but for people in all walks of life. In addition to its role in the concert hall, it became one of the major sources of home entertainment at a time before recording technology made it possible to hear music on phonographs and radios. The musical members of the family would acquire sheet music reprinted from Europe and also music by a vast number of American composers, some aimed at virtuosic public performances, but a very large part intended for well-trained and serious amateurs at home.

The works on this album are from leading New England composers of the last third of the nineteenth century, mostly in the smaller forms of character pieces, made so popular by the works of Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Each of these works has a precise musical personality, ranging from references to older musical genres (Foote's Suite, or Paine's Fuga giocosa), to evocations of moods (Foote's Romance, or Whiting's Humoreske), scenes from the country (Paine's Village Dance, Chadwick's Barcarolle: dans le canot), or familiar characters (Nevin's Narcissus and Ophelia).

Eclipsed in the following generations by the modernists and the avant-garde, these late Romantics nonetheless produced a body of work that is distinctive, charming, and moving. Very little of it has been recorded until now; none has been recorded on a contemporaneous instrument, that would allow us today to hear something like the sounds which the composers themselves grew up with, heard, and imagined.

Arthur Foote (1853-1937)

It was difficult to get an advanced musical education in the USA during Foote's youth, and many talented musicians of his generation completed their studies in Germany. Foote was the first serious American composer who finished his composition studies in the United States. His timing was fortunate, for Harvard had recently made John Knowles Paine the first professor of music at an American university. Foote got his bachelor's degree at Harvard, and followed it with the first master's degree awarded in the field of music in the United States. He was a busy pianist, organist, teacher, and performer of chamber music.

His lasting significance, however, is as a composer. Like all the American composers of his generation, who were stretching themselves to write in the large forms then dominated by the great German romantics, he knew and loved the music of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms, all of them also masters of chamber music. Strongly noticeable, as well, is his interest in the composers of earlier periods, particularly Bach, whose reputation was growing steadily through the nineteenth century. The fusion of these influences with the composer's own musical vision evokes a time and place that are at once very familiar and long gone.

His D minor Suite was composed in 1886, all movements but the first being dedicated to leading contemporaries: George W. Chadwick, Julius Rehn Weber, and Fanny Bloomfield Zeisler. The Prelude and Fugue show his interest in the Baroque period most strongly: in the Prelude, a steady rhythmic flow of sixteenths contrasts with a dotted rhythm pattern, and the Baroque character of the three-part Fugue blends into a Romantic style as it builds towards a climax. The Romance begins like a simple lyrical bagatelle with a melody in the right hand over chordal patterns in the left; but it unfolds with a driven passion that moves chromatically until it slips back to the home key for a restatement of the opening and a tranquil close. The finale may be labeled "graceful" (grazioso), but it becomes a considerable showpiece as the flashing triple subdivisions of the beats in 9/8 time build to splashes of scales and thunderous chords.

Arthur Whiting (1861-1936)

Whiting's modest output consists mostly of songs and piano pieces. His larger works were a piano concerto and a suite for piano and orchestra, both written for himself to premiere. He studied piano and composition at the New England Conservatory in Boston with William Sherwood and George Chadwick, respectively. He went to Munich from 1883-1885, where he worked with Chadwick's former teacher Rheinberger. The Bagatelles recorded here were published in 1895, the year he moved from Boston to New York.

The Caprice in C major builds itself on the figures presented in the first four measures–a right-hand melody with dotted rhythms and arpeggiated chords on the off beats in the left hand. Using these simple ideas almost exclusively, he creates a lively Allegro giocoso movement. The Idylle in D-flat evokes Chopin's nocturnes with a slow melodic line that rises across a wide span over a rustle of arpeggiated triplets in the left hand; in the middle section, the relationship of left and right hands is reversed. The Bagatelle in E-flat races along breathlessly with arpeggiated triplet figures over a bass line evoking a light waltz. The E minor Humoreske evokes an atmosphere of exotic mystery.

John Knowles Paine (1839-1906)

Paine is the long-forgotten father of serious American music, the first American composer to write a large-scale work (his Mass in D, completed in the early 1860s) that could and did win acclaim at a performance in Berlin, the heart of the nineteenth-century musical establishment. And it was an acclaim offered without condescension, based simply on the quality of the score. Such a success in Germany meant that Paine was also recognized at home as an important master of music. He established a reputation as a virtuoso organist, and in that line he did yeoman service in introducing the organ music of J. S. Bach to American audiences. He began to teach at Harvard, first on a non-credit basis, but eventually as the founder of the first music department in an American university. He thus began the tradition of Harvard composers that led in a direct line through his student Edward Burlingame Hill to Walter Piston. Paine's other students include Arthur Foote, Frederick Shepherd Converse, John Alden Carpenter, Daniel Gregory Mason, and Owen Wister, who wrote the classic western novel The Virginian, but was a composer before he turned to literature.

Paine exercised still more significant influence as a composer. With his two symphonies, he inspired younger contemporaries to pursue composition on the grand scale. Though succeeding generations patronized him for his clear development from German models, today we have begun to recognize not only his great talent, but also his achievement: the creation of a clearly identifiable musical personality. This is most evident, perhaps, in his larger works.

His smaller works–such as the piano pieces to be heard here–were naturally influenced by the music of the great pianist-composers of the mid-century. The Fuga giocosa shows his craftsmanship in a mood of cheerful amusement, a lively short fugue built on the baseball refrain, "Over the fence is out, boys!" The ten short numbers of In the Country (composed in 1876) were the most frequently performed of his piano pieces. Each of the ten numbers (of which six are recorded here) captures an image implied by the title–a Schubertian stream for The Mill, bird calls in Woodnotes, the folksy liveliness of the Village Dance, or the joy of Welcome home, the most brilliant movement in the set.

George Whitefield Chadwick (1854-1931)

Chadwick was one of the central figures of the second generation that began to use American folk and popular elements in their concert works as a way of expressing their national identity. An eighth-generation New Englander whose grandfather had fought at Bunker Hill, Chadwick was fiercely proud of his nationality. He made his living in part as an organist, but his real "instrument" was the orchestra, which he approached both as composer and conductor. Like so many of his generation, Chadwick has long suffered from a reputation as a hidebound academic, a reputation stemming too often from opinions offered by those who knew little of his music. It may be a useful corrective to note that his own best-selling harmony textbook offered the advice that any chord could follow any other chord, so long as the expressive result justified it.

Chadwick's characteristic love of colorful effect, spirited rhythm, and warm melody can be heard in the two pieces included here, selected from a set of five "character pieces" published in 1905, each of which is dedicated to a musician of Chadwick's Boston circle. Dans le canot (In the Canoe) is a lyrical barcarolle, with a gentle rocking rhythm heightened by ties connecting some of the triplets. Les grenouilles (The Frogs) is a humoresque which plays with the jerky motions of the frogs and a suggestion of their croaking sounds.

Ethelbert Nevin (1862-1901)

Nevin's career was cut short by ill health. He studied in Germany in the late 1870s, then with B. J. Lang (Margaret Ruthven Lang's father) in Boston in the early 1880s. In 1885, he was one of a small group of students who were coached by Hans von Bülow and performed for such notables as Joseph Joachim and Cosima Wagner. Between periods of living in Boston, he toured and taught in major European cities. Like Chopin, whose influence can be seen very strongly in his work, Nevin composed mostly in modest forms – character pieces for solo piano, or songs – intended largely for home music-makers, who appreciated the charm and gentility of his music. Several of his songs (especially The Rosary) and piano works (especially Narcissus) sold extremely well and long remained popular.

As its title suggests, Water Scenes consists of character pieces with images related in some way to water. The lively Dragon Fly moves with a constantly-repeated rapid rhythmic figure that rarely comes to a momentary pause. Ophelia recalls the tragic end of Hamlet's love, drowning in a quiet stream amidst garlands of flowers. Water Nymph is a graceful image of a light water creature gliding in a gentle waltz. Narcissus evokes the myth of the vain and beautiful youth who fell in love with his own reflection in a pond and stared at it till he withered away into a flower that leans over the water as if looking at itself. This is one of Nevin's most popular numbers, and even remains familiar to many people today, with a jaunty theme first in the left hand, then in the right, before a middle section of harmonically rich contemplation and a return to the main theme. The waters driving the boat in Barcarolle are a good deal faster than those for Chadwick's canoe, but Nevin uses the image to create a real finale of larger scope for the set.

Margaret Ruthven Lang (1867-1972)

Lang grew up in the musical household of her father, B. J. Lang, who was a teacher of piano and organ, conductor, musical entrepreneur, and composer. He was an active supporter of Wagner, and the family visited Bayreuth in 1875 so that Wagner himself could give them a tour of the Festspielhaus, which was to open the following year. (The eight-year-old Margaret is said to have baby-sat the Wagner children on that occasion.) In 1893, she became the first woman to have an orchestral work performed by the Boston Symphony. She composed actively until 1909, when her father died. Afterward, though she continued to attend Boston Symphony concerts until after her 100th birthday (and to this day she holds the record for the longest subscription), she gave up composition entirely and devoted herself to writing religious tracts.

Sadly, she destroyed all her orchestral music, but the works that were published during the period of her musical activity fortunately escaped this fate – leaving us with her piano works, songs, and choral compositions. One of them is included here: the E-minor Rhapsody, a work which clearly shows

the influence of the harmonic languages of Wagner and Brahms. It is headed with an epigraph of two verses taken from Victor Hugo's Voix intérieures, published in 1837:

Puisqu'ici-bas toute âme
Donne à quelqu'un
Sa musique, sa flamme,
Ou son parfum.

Je te donne à cette heure,
Penché sur toi,
La chose la meilleure
Que j'aie en moi!

Since every soul that wanders here below
Yields up its flame, or scent, or melody –

To you, here in my arms, tonight, I give
All that is best in me!

In keeping with these lines, it is a work of deeply felt passion, moving from the strong declamation of the opening through lyrical chromaticism to a conclusion of Lisztian exaltation.
© Steven Ledbetter
Translation of V. Hugo by Daniel Grader

ARTIST'S INTRODUCTION
Gershwin spent his childhood in Brooklyn, one of the poorest neighborhoods of New York, where the sufferings of black people were expressed through the rhythm and music, especially jazz, blues, ragtime and popular rhythm which shows influences of different musical genres. The young Gershwin poured these influences into his own music, later enriched by piano and composition studies (even if his studies were not strictly academic).

From a very young age, as little more than a boy, Gershwin wrote his first songs, working as a song plugger for Tin Pan Alley and for showbiz celebrities. He won success with 'Swanee' and Broadway opened its doors to him, and later Hollywood. His popularity boomed, and his journey from Brooklyn to Broadway to Carnegie Hall and the Metropolitan Opera, in his classical compositions, represents and embodiment of the American dream. His great talent was recognised by other landmark composers of his era including Ravel, Stravinsky and Schoenberg. Classical masters of the piano such as Ravel, Debussy, Schumann and Rachmaninov also seem to leave a faint imprint on these transciptions. The idea to make this recording took me back to my own childhood, and my first musical experiences of the US. I left Italy with scores of Bach, Mozart, Chopin and Rachmaninov, but found myself listening to the best jazz and ragtime musicians. I was astonished by the rhythm of their music, the acoustics, the spontaneity of their jam sessions. The time I spent there seemed to pass in a dream. And so, it is in a spirit of honouring Gershwin's genius that I made this recording. While playing these pieces, I conceived the wish to make arrangements of my own, often quite different in character, as a personal tribute to Gershwin. My arrangements sometimes venture far from the original transcriptions, while staying faithful to his superb melodies. I hope that the Great Gershwin would appreciate my little homage, which I offer with all my love.
© Enrico Fagnoni
Translated by Maria Russo

NEW WRINKLES: THE SONG BOOK OF GERSHWIN
In 1929 the publishing house Simon and Schuster asked Gershwin to write down some of his improvisations and variations on paper. Between 1931 and 1932. Gershwin composed solo piano arrangements of 18 songs. In May 1932, Bennet Cerfs Random House prepared a deluxe limited edition of 300 copies of George Gershwin's Song-book, which were illustrated by a New York artist Constantin Alajalov, and were signed by Gershwin and Alajalov. The song book contained 18 of Gershwin's most famous songs from musicals that he wrote

between the 1920s and the early 1930s. They were arranged chronologically by date of composition from the 1919 'Swanee' to the 1932 'Who Cares?', and printed first in their regular piano/vocal sheet music form, followed in each case by Gershwin's instrumental variations, or as he called them, 'transcriptions' for solo piano. These printed transcriptions are the only published form of his improvisations. As documents of Gershwin's own pianistic style they become more valuable still for the insights afforded by his preface, which directly addresses his work in the context of his most significant forebears.

'The evolution of our popular pianistic style,' wrote Gershwin, 'really began with the introduction of ragtime, just before the Spanish-American war, and came to its culminating point in the jazz era that followed upon the Great War. A number of names come crowding into my memory: Mike Bernard. Les Copeland. Melville Ellis, Lucky Roberts. Zez Confrey, Arden and Ohman, and others. Each of these was responsible for the popularization of a new technique, or a new wrinkle in playing... To allof these predecessors I am indebted; some of the effects I use in my transcriptions derive from their style of playing the piano.... There was the habit Les Copeland had of thumping his left hand onto a blurred group of notes, from which he would slide into a regular chord; it made a rather interesting pulse in the bass: a sort of happy-go-lucky sforzando effect. Then there was Bernard's habit of playing the melody in the left hand, while he wove a filigree of counterpoint with the right; for a time, this was all the rage... Confrey's contribution has been of a more permanent nature, as some of his piano figures found their way into serious American compositions.'

Gershwin discussed the main reason for publishing the Song Book: 'Most songs die at an early age and are soon completely forgotten by the self-same public that once sang them with gusto. The reason for this is that they are sung and played too much when they alive, and cannot stand the strain of their very popularity... When the publishers asked me to gather a group of my songs for publication I took up the idea enthusiastically, because I thought that this might be a means of prolonging their life.' Concerning the transcriptions in the book, he continued: 'Playing my songs as frequently as I do at private parties. I have naturally been led to compose numerous variations upon them, and to indulge the desire for complication and variety that every composer feels when he manipulates the same material over and over again. It was this habit of mine that led to the original suggestion to publish a group of songs not only in the simplified arrangements that the public knew, but also in the variations that I had devised.' Gershwin well understood the commercial imperatives behind the Song Book: the publishers printed simplified versions because 'the majority of the purchasers of popular music are little girls with little hands, who have not progressed very far in their study of the piano'. But these versions, refined through constant performances by the composer himself, are aimed at more serious players. We can break down the influences on his song and piano styles into three categories. There is jazz, in the 'blue' flattened thirds and sevenths; in the syncopated rhythms and the walking bass lines of parallel sixths and tenths. There is ragtime, in the left-hand broken chord patterns ('stride bass') and the right-hand syncopations, most commonly arranged as three-note figures, the second of them twice as long as the first and third. Finally there is the influence of Jewish and specifically klezmer music, in the minor-third inflections to the melodies and the kind of declamation that derives ultimately from Synagogue chants. The transcriptions are all arranged in major keys, and they omit the original verses of the songs, being based solely on the refrain or chorus material. The AABA and ABAB are two most common forms with only one transcription, 'Who cares?' in ABAC form. The tempo markings are written in English, instead of the Italian markings for his songs. Their origins vary, but most of them share the spontaneity of 'Do It Again' which premiered in the 1922 Broadway show The French Doll, performed by actress Irène Bordoni. Gershwin later remembered: 'I was in the office of Max Dreyfus, my publisher, one day when Buddy DeSylva walked in. DeSylva said jokingly to me, "George, let's write a hit!" I matched him by saying, "OK!" I sat down at the piano, and began playing a theme which I was composing on the spot... Buddy listened for a few minutes and then began chanting this title – "Oh, Do It Again!", which he had just fitted to my theme.'

© Peter Quantrill

In the annals of American music, there is no other figure quite like Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990): conductor, composer, pianist, teacher, and media star. "Lenny," as his friends called him, was, from the 1940s onward, a durable part of the American fabric, the last classical artist ever to become a household name in the United States. Though widely celebrated—especially for his popular theater works, of which West Side Story is the enduring masterpiece, and for his presence on television as the nation's most renowned musical educator—his fame was not achieved without a great deal of controversy. Even Bernstein's conducting, regarded by many musicians as thrilling, received decidedly mixed reviews. "He would perform as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic on Thursday," said conductor John Mauceri, whom Bernstein mentored, "and read how terrible it was over breakfast on Friday." When the Vienna Philharmonic crowned him as the anti-Karajan—setting his passionate, effusive style as a foil against that of the dictatorial, perfectionistic conductor Herbert von Karajan, it settled the matter. Leonard Bernstein's classical compositions similarly sparked debate. His detractors claimed that he often strove too hard for profundity, sacrificing the immediacy and direct communication he achieved so easily with popular audiences, in order to be recognized as "serious." Yet, even in his most academic strivings, his lyrical gifts are always in evidence.

His piano pieces reflect all these strands of his multifaceted personality, in works as different as Touches (1981)—heavily influenced by Aaron Copland's thorny Piano Variations (a piece the young Bernstein studied and frequently performed, finding its sound world to be "prophetic, clangorous, fiercely dissonant," and "intoxicating")—and, on the other side of the scale, his often tender, sentimental Anniversaries, miniatures written in commemoration of important people in his life. Taken together his piano works form a musical diary tracing the breadth of his experiences and ideas. And the smaller piano pieces often preview bigger things to come.

For example, Ilana the Dreamer, the first of the Four Sabras (1950) became foundational material for Bernstein's stage musical, Candide. Four of his Five Anniversaries (1949-51) appear as themes in his violin concerto, the Serenade after Plato's "Symposium." For Susanna Kyle, also from Five Anniversaries, was used in the score of the Broadway musical, Peter Pan. And Dina, The Tomboy Who Weeps Alone, from Four Sabras, can be heard in Bernstein's score for the film, On the Waterfront. Reshaping materials he had already used was a common practice for Bernstein, who delighted in finding fresh ways of looking at the familiar.

The personal commemorations he created were not really portraits, in the way that Virgil Thomson's musical depictions were. Thomson, sitting with a stack of music paper in his lap—much as an artist might hold a pad of drawing paper—would scrutinize his subjects and come up with a tonal "likeness." Bernstein's musical illustrations are, in a sense, self-portrayals, revealing different aspects of his own multi-faceted personality. To play these works well requires an understanding of the various elements that made up the Bernstein persona.

Michele Tozzetti accomplishes the task brilliantly. He finds the heartfelt tenderness in Ilana, the Dreamer, brings out the Jewish elements in Idele, the Chassidele and animates the dance rhythms of Yosi, the Jokester (likely meant as a tribute to cartoonist Yossi Stern). The spirit of Aaron Copland hovers over all of this music; in the Anniversary dedicated to him, For Aaron Copland (in Seven Anniversaries, 1943), Tozzetti captures the sound and spirit of the man Bernstein called "my first friend in New York, my master, my idol, my sage, my shrink, my guide, my counselor, my elder brother, [and] my beloved friend." The pianist reveals a delicate sense of sonority along with exquisite dynamic control in For Paul Bowles, and musters the perfect aggressive edginess to bring to life For Sergei Koussevitzky. He injects youthful vigor into Bernstein's Sonata (1937), a probing work rich in counterpoint, written when the composer was still a student.

Many of the dedicatees who populate this collection are unknown to the public. These include the four named Sabras (definition: a sabra is a cactus-type plant with thorns on the outside and sweet flesh within, a term applied to native-born Israelis), and, in the Anniversaries, numerous family members, old friends and colleagues. But some of the citations represent important personages: Bernstein's wife, actress Felicia Montealegre; jazz pedagogue

Johnny Mehegan; composers David Diamond, Sergei Koussevitzky, William Schuman, Lucas Foss, and Stephen Sondheim; writer Paul Bowles; and pianists Claudio Arrau, William Kapell and Leo Smit. (The piece in Thirteen Anniversaries (completed 1988) originally dedicated to Arrau actually commemorated the date when Bernstein met his future wife at an Arrau reception; it was later retitled, For Felicia, On Our 28th Birthday (& Her 52nd). Helen Coates, Bernstein's childhood piano teacher and, later, his secretary, was a formidable presence in the composer's life, described by Bernstein's one-time assistant, Jack Gottlieb as an "iron fist in a velvet glove." Her theme in Thirteen Anniversaries became the Sanctus in his Mass. Also on this recording are Non Troppo Presto, a manuscript discovered in the Leonard Bernstein archive at the Library of Congress; and Touches: Chorale, Eight Variations and Coda, commissioned by the Van Cliburn Piano Competition as a required work for the competing pianists in 1981. Its bluesy chorale is identical to Virgo Blues, written for his daughter, Jamie on her twenty-sixth birthday in 1978. Bernstein dedicated this work "to my first love, the keyboard." In Michele Tozzetti's hands, that love is beautifully realized.
© Stuart Isacoff

Charles Ives: Piano Sonatas Nos. 1 & 2

About the programme
'*It was in the Seventies that I first heard of the American composer Charles Ives. His work and the story of his life made a deep impression on me. Charles Ives created a musical world of unbounded fantasy, free of all rules and intimately connected with life itself. That is why so much goes on in his music at the same time: mystery, unbridled mirth, chaos, harmony. Through my years of experience with the music of Stockhausen, Boulez and Xenakis, I have come to gain command over the technique needed to perform the piano sonatas by Ives. These compositions are an undoubted high point in the modern piano repertoire.*'
(René Eckhardt, pianist)

'*To mark this milestone in the personal artistic development of Dutch pianist René Eckhardt, Radio Netherlands International offered him the opportunity to record the piano sonatas by Ives under optimal conditions. This album is the result.*'
(Hans Quant, Head of Music, Radio Netherlands International)

Charles E. Ives (1874–1954)
Those fortunate enough to have heard Charles Ives play speak of his great talent for improvisation. He would portray his wildest fantasies on the piano, giving commentary or singing enthusiastically all the while. Something very special would happen when he gave his associations free rein. Tunes, hymns or ragtimes would emerge, often nothing more than mere fragments that provided fresh impulses for the improvisation. Ives was a master of the art of quotation and those familiar with the riches of American popular melody of 100 years ago are still finding new allusions in his work. The two piano sonatas abound in examples of his fantasizing on the American musical tradition. In them, the composer in Ives takes precedence over the improviser; he forges the many, seemingly unrelated musical snatches into a closely knit unity. They are tales that rise far above treasured childhood memories. Igor Stravinsky once rightly said: 'Charles Ives was an original man, a talented man, a courageous man. Let us honour him with his works.'

Piano Sonata No.1 (c.1900–1910)
As the finished manuscript of Ives's Piano Sonata No.1 was lost, Lou Harrison made in the winter of 1948–9 a reconstruction of the piece, relying on dark photocopies of hastily pencilled sketches and isolated movements. This version was authorized by the composer and published in 1954. The overall structure of the sonata is symmetrical, hinging around the slow–fast–slow form of movement III; movements II and IV are brisk ragtimes and I and V are imposing fantasias. Each is constructed from an idiosyncratic montage of segments that have an individual character and tempo. The various hymns quoted in the First Piano Sonata form the essence of its musical content. Ives

heard them as a child at religious gatherings in New England and they are here the vehicles of a vast wealth of associations with the social and religious life of his native region. Their intervals, motifs and rhythms are the building blocks of the composition.

Movement I is a grand narration filled with remembrances of the 1880s and 1890s, the years of Ives's youth. Emerging from the contemplative polyphony at its beginning are shreds of the hymn I Was a Wandering Sheep. The phrases gradually become broader and after a resolute Allegro we hear in the final phase of the piece the longest quotation, in a calm but harmonically intense setting, which is then interrupted by a wild, heroic cadenza. Movements II and IV are arrangements of ragtimes that Ives had written previously. It was a type of music that fascinated the composer. The swinging accents and counter-accents stimulated him to create polyrhythmic structures of five beats in the right hand against three in the left (movement IVb) or of ten against seven.

Ives could hear perfectly in his mind this, at the time highly advanced, type of rhythmic combination. In the Inn (movement IIb) was inspired by George Felsberg, the pianist at 'Poli's', a theatre that the composer frequented. Greatly admired by Ives, Felsberg had gained notoriety for being able to read the newspaper while playing the piano with impressive force and virtuosity. Sometimes, when he would pause to drink a glass of beer, Ives would take over for him.

Movement III is a monumental fantasia on the hymn What a Friend We Have in Jesus. To enhance the flow of motion in the peaceful Largo, Ives notated it without bar lines. The musical tension increases in the Allegro, the axis of the sonata. Above the ascending scrolls of left hand figures, the hymn swells as a multitudinous choir singing full out. Tranquillity is re-established with the return of the Largo. The hymn ebbs away as though in a dream, one of the most exquisite moments of peace in the sonata. Movement V is an expressive, grandly conceived finale built on a motif of a minor second and minor third. The characteristic massive 'maestoso' chord formations, with the motif in the upper voice, are expanded and transformed. Twice, lyrical passages break through which, through changes of metre, are composed rubatos. Following upon an impressive final climax comes for the last time 'like a mysterious unanswered question' the descending minor second and minor third motif from the distance.

Piano Sonata No.2 'Concord, Mass. 1840–1860' (1911–1915)

In Essays before a Sonata, a commentary on the 'Concord' Sonata, Ives wrote: 'The whole is an attempt to present one person's impression of the spirit of transcendentalism that is associated in the minds of many with the place Concord in Massachusetts, of over a half century ago. This is undertaken in impressionistic pictures of the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and the naturalist Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), a sketch of the Alcotts, and a scherzo, supposed to reflect a lighter quality which is often found in the fantastic side of the novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864)'.

The idea of portraying these famous thinkers in four movements dates from 1911. Ives set out to compose the fleeting and kaleidoscopic view of life propagated by the Transcendentalists. Realizing the paradox of fixing spontaneity on paper, he appended the first movement with the indication: 'Throughout this movement, and to some extent in the others, there are many passages not to be too evenly played and in which the tempo is not precise or static: it varies usually with the mood of the day.'

The 'Concord' Sonata has two basic motifs. The first of these is the 'Beethoven motif', the opening four notes of this composer's Fifth Symphony, always characterized as 'Thus Fate knocks at the door' and described by Ives as 'the Soul of humanity, knocking at the door of the Divine Mysteries'. The second motif is the chain of descending octaves, the bounding steps of the bass with which the sonata opens.

There is also a third element, 'the human faith melody'. Movement I, Emerson, is made up of sections that Ives referred to as 'prose' and 'verse'. The prose sections vary and contrast both motifs in a complex, metrically free polyphony. The metrical 'verses' are kept more simple. As in life itself, various levels of musical reality operate simultaneously. To this end, Ives was able to create an

enormous musical breadth in his writing for the piano. Following a climax, the Beethoven motif appears in a vigorous rhythmic unison. Then the music relaxes until the motif is finally combined with gentle minor thirds, 'to be heard as a kind of overtone' and meant 'to reflect the overtones of the soul of humanity'.

Movement II, Hawthorne is a swirling montage of contrasts, clusters, hymns, marches, ragtimes and nocturnes. Its beginning reminded Ives of the poetic flow of lines and figures etched on a cold morning by frost on the windowpane. The lavish variations on the Beethoven motif are suddenly replaced in the middle section by the hymn Jesus, Lover of My Soul, 'as a hymn is sometimes heard over a distant hill just after a heavy storm'. The hymn is interrupted now and then by 'secular noises' and is finally drowned out by a march: 'the circus parade comes down Main Street'. Hawthorne ends like a 'roller coaster ride'. Resounding above the tumultuous scene is O Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean.

Movement III, The Alcotts. After the fantastic evocation of Hawthorne, this harmonious and romantic movement exudes the tranquillity of 'old man Alcott's – the great talker's – sonorous thought'. Ives coloured the movement as though he were seated behind an organ and shortly before the end he pulls all the registers open with the 'human faith motive' ringing out in all its glory. The cadenza that follows makes use of the entire keyboard in order to reach the right harmonic intensity; it flows into a magistral C major in which the Beethoven motif is intoned.

Movement IV, Thoreau. In poignant imagery, Ives describes a day of Thoreau's life on Walden Pond as a guide to this movement. Nature is the central issue and mist, train sounds, the church bells of Concord and the crystal clear water serve as metaphors of the fluctuations in Thoreau's frame of mind. Near the end we hear a melody that combines the various main motivic elements of the sonata. Ives's suggestion to play this melody on the flute – ad libitum – has been followed on this recording, for, as the composer wrote, 'Thoreau much prefers to hear the flute over Walden.'

© René Eckhardt

John Adams

'Minimalism, but not as you know it' – a concise recap of John Adams' works by the British paper The Guardian. Since the late seventies, Adams has been capturing audiences worldwide with his absolutely original and open-minded approach to music. Referring to himself as a 'post-style' composer, Adams is active in almost every genre, from opera to film scores, jazz and chamber music.

Amidst that tremendous body of work, Adams' output for piano is surprisingly small. Until today, only four 'real' piano pieces, for one or two instruments, have made it to the stage. Yet, listening to those four makes one realize Adams could not be more to the point. In using a wide range of techniques, combining a broad bandwidth of influences and, maybe most important, addressing an enormous scope of emotions, this small piano oeuvre says everything that needs to be expressed.

In Hallelujah Junction, his very entertaining memoir, Adams refers to Phrygian gates (1977) as his 'first mature composition'. By then, he was thirty years old, had met and worked with great musicians, and had even been teaching composition for several years. However, in all his previous works, he struggled to find the voice he was looking for, combining a minimalist approach with some of the harmonic and rhythmic assets of jazz and rock.

Phrygian gates was written in a small cottage by the beach – a very appropriate atmosphere for composing a piece inspired by a fascination with waves. Adams moved a 'battered' spinet into his small working space and 'banged away at it for months'. Gentle drippings, rolling flows and thundering streams all ended up in one big melodic wave metaphor. At the same time Phrygian gates is about music itself. Adams travels through half the keys of the circle of fifths, each time passing a gate separating the Lydian and Phrygian modes. In doing so, he also covers a large emotional terrain.

While Phrygian gates is a virtuosic technical challenge, it's 'smaller companion' China gates (also from 1977) focuses more on simplicity. In this delicate miniature, Adams again explores different modes, but in a more transparent way. On his website Earbox, the composer says that many years

later, the piece strikes him as ‘calling for real attention to details of dark, light and the shadows that exist between’.

Adams grew up in a very musical family, his parents playing in big bands and community orchestras, encouraging their son to do the same. The young boy, already fantasizing about becoming a composer, chose the clarinet. ‘Unfortunately,’ he writes in his autobiography, ‘neither my parents nor I realized until too late how important piano lessons could have been.’ After China gates, it took almost twenty years for Adams to compose for the piano again. ‘I suspect my lifelong frustrations with the piano go hand in hand with the birth of many of my best musical ideas,’ he says, and maybe Hallelujah Junction (1996) is the embodiment of that statement. This piece is essentially an expedition into the combining of two pianos, on this album played by Jeroen van Veen (who delivered the Dutch premiere of this work in 2002 in the Concertgebouw together with his brother Maarten) and his wife Sandra van Veen.

Named after a truck stop, conveniently placed on the meeting point of two highway routes, Hallelujah Junction gives voice to the interlocking of two instruments. ‘What attracts me is the possibility of having similar or even identical material played at a very slight delay, thereby creating a kind of planned resonance,’ Adams states. The music bounces back and forth between the two pianists, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish who plays what. The result is very rhythmical, almost boogie woogie-like, including the part where it’s difficult to remain seated.

The same goes even more for the Adams’ most recent piano piece, American berserk. In this composition from 2001 the composer looks back at his childhood, growing up with parents who did not distinguish between classical music and jazz. From the great nineteenth century virtuosos to ragtime, from Ives’ modernistic renewals to big band swing, everything goes into one festive melting pot. American berserk is fun to play and listen to, but also slightly twisted - almost like a pianistic sideshow. American berserk is loud, rough, and spiky, all qualities that are rarely associated with minimalism. And yet it is. In its repetitions, in its attention to the complexity of small motifs, in the whole attitude of using basic means to open an immense world. Minimalism, but not as you knew it.

© Vrouwkje Tuinman

Philip Glass’s Piano Etudes Book I is a collection of ten solo piano works composed between 1994 and 1999. It serves as both a showcase of Glass’s signature minimalist style and a personal journey of technical and emotional exploration. These etudes were written, in part, to improve Glass’s own piano-playing skills. Over time, they have become beloved works in the contemporary classical repertoire, appreciated for their hypnotic repetition, evolving patterns, and meditative quality.

Each etude in Book I is distinct in character, combining minimalist techniques with expressive depth. The pieces feature shifting rhythmic structures and harmonic progressions, gradually building intensity through repetition and subtle variation. While minimalist in nature, they allow for an emotional interpretation that resonates with audiences. The etudes explore a range of moods, from the rhythmic drive of the first etude to the contemplative nature of others, offering a diversity that showcases Glass’s wide expressive palette.

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